

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGEN, MOPS, BC, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: BOTSWANA VIEWS OF US-UK DIFFERENCES
AND RHODESIAN MILITARY INTENTIONS

REF: (A) GABORONE 700; (B) STATE 061829;
(C) GABORONE 576

I. BOTSWANA EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY MPOFU CALLED ON
DEPARTMENT LATE MARCH 10 TO INQUIRE ABOUT US VIEWS ON
NEXT STEPS IN RHODESIA. HE SAID THE GOB WAS BEING
PLACED IN AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT POSITION BY THE
COMBINATION OF A PARTIALLY ACCEPTABLE INTERNAL
SETTLEMENT, THE INTRANSIGENT POSITION TAKEN BY THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT, AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT RHODESIAN
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INTENTIONS TOWARD BOTSWANA IN THE WAKE OF THE
FEBRUARY 27 AMBUSH OF BOTSWANA TROOPS NEAR KAZUNGULA
(REF C). ON TOP OF THIS, HE SAID, HIS GOVERNMENT
WAS BECOMING CONCERNED BY HINTS IN THE PRESS OF
GROWING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND AMERICANS
CONCERNING HOW TO REACT TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A
"SETTLEMENT" IN SALISBURY.

2. MPOFU'S REFERENCE TO GOB PERCEPTION OF US-UK
SPLIT WAS DISTURBING IN VIEW OF ITS COINCIDENCE WITH

REF (A), WHICH REPORTED SECOND INCIDENT IN RECENT WEEKS IN WHICH AMBASSADOR WAS UNABLE TO ACCOMPANY BRITISH COLLEAGUE IN JOINT DEMARCHE BECAUSE BRITISH "TRIGGER" HAD ARRIVED BUT OURS HAD NOT. APPARENTLY, BRITISH SIMPLY JUMPED GUN SLIGHTLY ON DISPATCH OF INSTRUCTIONS AND AMBASSADOR'S PROMPT EX POST FACTO ASSOCIATION WITH BRITISH APPROACH SHOULD HAVE DISPELLED ANY GOB MISPERCEPTION OF ANGLO-AMERICAN GAP. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF MPOFU'S COMMENTS HE WAS GIVEN DETAILED EXPLANATION OF DISCREPANCY IN ARRIVAL TIMES OF INSTRUCTION CABLES (TIME ZONES, ETC.) AND WAS ASKED TO CONVEY TO GOB THAT THIS WAS ONLY REASON FOR LACK OF JOINT APPROACH.

3. MPOFU SAID GOB WOULD FIND EXPLANATION REASSURING. HE SAID IT WAS ALARMED BY POTENTIAL FOR ESCALATION OF FIGHTING AND SENSITIVE TO INDICATIONS OF DIRECTION OTHER COUNTRIES PLANNED TO TAKE IN REGARD TO INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. HE SAID HIS EMBASSY HAD LITTLE CONTACT WITH DIPLOMATS OF OTHER FRONT LINE STATES IN WASHINGTON AND RELIED ON US AND UK FOR MUCH OF ITS PERSPECTIVE ON EVENTS.

4. MPOFU THEN ASKED IF US FELT THE FEBRUARY 27
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AMBUSH OF BDF TROOPS NEAR KAZUNGULA (ENDING THREE-MONTH LULL ON BOTSWANA-RHODESIA BORDER) MEANT RHODESIANS CONTEMPLATING STEPPED-UP INCURSIONS INTO BOTSWANA TERRITORY. DEPTOFF SAID US HAD NO EVIDENCE OF THIS AND SUSPECTED RHODESIANS HAD BEEN EMBARRASSED BY SHARP INTERNATIONAL REACTION, BUT COULD NOT BE SURE OF RHODESIAN INTENTIONS OR OF MIX BETWEEN POLITICAL AND TACTICAL MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS IN SUCH INCIDENTS. MPOFU SAID BDF REMAINED UNDER ORDERS NOT TO ASSIST OR ENGAGE GUERRILLAS BUT, WHEN IT ENCOUNTERED THEM, WAS IN THE PRACTICE OF DISARMING THEM AND TRANSPORTING THEM (IN ITS OWN VEHICLES) BACK TO ZAMBIAN BORDER.

5. COMMENT: WHILE MPOFU DID NOT KNOW WHETHER AMBUSHED BDF CONVOY MIGHT HAVE BEEN CARRYING ANY DISARMED GUERRILLAS BACK TO BORDER, HIS ELABORATION ON TIBONE'S EXPLANATION OF BDF ORDERS REGARDING GUERRILLAS (REF C) COULD HELP ACCOUNT FOR DISCREPANCY BETWEEN RHODESIAN AND BOTSWANA ACCOUNTS OF INCIDENT. OBVIOUS DIFFICULTY UNDER HOT-PURSUIT CONDITIONS IN DISTINGUISHING THIS PRACTICE FROM "AIDING" GUERRILLAS POINTS TO POSSIBILITY OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN FUTURE

AS BDF FINDS ITSELF IN NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE POSITION OF
ATTEMPTING TO PATROL BORDER WITHOUT BECOMING INVOLVED
IN COMBAT. VANCE

NOTE BY OC/T; DISTRIBUTION COORDINATED WITH MR. CEURVORST S/S-O.

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